



Senator Sheila Kuehl

23rd District Newsletter • August 2006

The Ongoing Struggle for Safe Schools: From AB 537 to SB 1437

By Jonathan Snowden, Senate Fellow

Early in the 1990s, activists and school officials began to recognize what students and teachers had known for a far longer time: antigay school harassment was a significant and unique problem, both in California and nationwide. Beginning in her first term in the Assembly in 1995, Senator Kuehl became the first California legislator to address the issue and to argue that nondiscrimination laws protecting students who were members of underrepresented minority groups should be expanded to include students who were lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). Her historic Assembly Bill 537, which was signed into law by Governor Gray Davis in 1999, placed California in the forefront of states with school nondiscrimination policies that cover sexual orientation. As the empirical evidence has mounted and momentum behind the issue has continued to build, other states have proposed similar laws (at least 10 in 2003).

The passage of AB 537 – statutorily titled the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act – represented the culmination of years of legislative effort and grassroots activism. The legislation also sparked a cascade of events with lasting statewide impact. As a byproduct of AB 537, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction convened the AB 537 Advisory Task Force in 2000, a 35-member group established to monitor the implementation of the Student Safety Act. A formal report published by the Task Force followed in 2001. In 2002, the California Safe Schools Coalition was founded as a nonprofit organization dedicated to furthering the goal of safe schools and coordinating efforts to implement AB 537. The coalition (comprised of more than 100 member organizations) shines a light on continuing problems of anti-LGBT school harassment, and monitors trends through research.

Positive change has flowed from the gains earned in 1999. As knowledge of the Student Safety Act has spread among students, teachers and school administrators, there has been greater pressure for administrative accountability. Students have been a driving force behind exerting this pressure, using the platform provided by AB 537 to redress antigay harassment and discrimination. However, in spite of these advancements, there is still an unacceptable amount of anti-LGBT harassment in California schools, and safe schools advocates continue to explore proactive solu-

tions to the problem. Now that there is a legal mechanism to remedy cases of harassment after they occur, the focus has shifted to eradicating the prejudice and ignorance that are at the root of discrimination.

One approach, identified as early as 2001 by the AB 537 Advisory Task Force, is to ensure that the portrayal of LGBT people in the curriculum is fair and unbiased. Studies indicate that a large majority of California youth report never seeing the contributions of notable historical LGBT figures positively reflected throughout their primary and secondary education. Some students even describe learning biased or discriminatory messages about LGBT people in their classroom instruction (for example, blaming the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the gay community).

Despite the valuable contributions of LGBT Americans to US society, most social studies textbooks and lesson plans omit this information and portray LGBT people in a negative light or in association with pathology, when they are mentioned at all. Aside from wasting the valuable educational opportunities afforded by historical figures like Bayard Rustin and landmarks events like Stonewall, educational bias reinforces the stereotypes and prejudice that precipitate antigay hate and violence. Empirical research has shown a correlation between a fair, LGBT-inclusive

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Clearing the Path for the Use of “Alternative” Fuels

by Marie Liu, Consultant
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water

Faced with tumultuous global climate change, soaring gas prices, and fossil fuel dependence, we have increasingly begun to talk about “alternative fuels.” But what exactly is an “alternative fuel?” This term usually refers to nonpetroleum fuels such as ethanol, natural gas, biodiesel, and hydrogen. While some alternative fuels may also be renewable and have air quality benefits, this is not the case with all.

Several alternative fuels are already present in California, albeit in relatively small quantities, and each has differing prospects for the use in the state’s future. Currently, the most talked about alternative fuel is probably ethanol, a type of alcohol. Most ethanol in the US is currently made from grain, particularly corn. However, research is being conducted to make ethanol in commercial quantities from cellulosic plants including trees and grasses.

Though you are probably not at all aware of it, you are already likely using a low gasoline-ethanol blend since ethanol has replaced MTBE as a clean air additive that was required by the federal government. Many cars on the road today are, or can be modified to be, “flex fuel” vehicles that can run on higher gasoline-ethanol blends, including E85 (85% ethanol mixed with 15% gasoline). A number of new and expanded corn-based ethanol refineries are in development in the US, partially due to high federal subsidies for both corn and ethanol.

But is ethanol a viable and desirable alternative fuel for California? Ideally, an alternative fuel will improve our independence from imported petroleum without sacrificing environmental quality. Ethanol is relatively clean burning, particularly for smog-forming emissions, in the higher percentage blends like E85. However, low blends can actually

have higher smog-forming emissions under certain conditions compared to pure gasoline.

However with many alternative fuels, the most significant environmental effects may not be at the tailpipe of the vehicle. Ethanol has a substantial list of hidden impacts, especially since most ethanol available in the US is made from corn that may make this fuel not very “renewable.” First, corn is a pesticide- and fertilizer-intensive crop that requires a significant amount of petroleum just to grow the corn. Second, corn is very water intensive and has contributed to the overdrafting of groundwater reservoirs. Third, the refining of corn-based ethanol requires substantial amounts of energy. Most ethanol plants are powered by natural gas; however, as the price of natural gas has risen, some ethanol plants have moved toward coal, which is bad for both air quality and greenhouse gas emissions. On a related note, there is an ongoing debate on whether the net energy of corn based ethanol is actually negative, that is, it may take more energy to produce ethanol than a vehicle can get out of it.

Corn-based ethanol also raises some food supply concerns. Converting agricultural land for certain kinds of ethanol production can both increase the amount of food that the US needs to import and cause farmland to encroach onto natural lands. Also, since California grows little corn, corn-based ethanol would not help with this state’s energy independence.

There are, however, a number of alternatives to corn for making ethanol that can be much more attractive for California, for agriculture and for sustainable energy. Senator Kuehl has seen first hand how Brazil has made ethanol a successful alternative fuel. Brazil’s sugar processing plants can either produce refined sugar or ethanol, depending on the country’s needs and market prices. When gas prices

are high, the refineries produce ethanol to power the country’s flex-fuel vehicles. Brazil, the world’s leading sugar producer, has been developing its ethanol infrastructure for 30 years and expects to reach full energy independence this year. Ethanol from sugar cane is cheaper and requires less energy to refine than ethanol from corn. Thus, the US may have to move away from corn-based ethanol in order to reap the results that Brazil has achieved. But we need to find the biomaterials best suited for ethanol production in California.

The brighter ethanol future may be with cellulose-based ethanol made from organic material such as wood, tall grasses, and crop residues. Many of these plants can be grown and har-

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ParkLINK Shuttle Brings Together Partners in Transportation and Preservation

by Laura Plotkin, District Director



On a very hot morning in Calabasas on Saturday, July 1, 2006, I met with an enthusiastic group of elected officials, as well as representatives of other offices and agencies to celebrate the second year of a three-year demonstration project called the Park Link Shuttle. We started the trip across from Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky's Calabasas office, walked up to the corner and across the street to the corner of Malibu Canyon and Agoura Road and climbed aboard for the inaugural ride of this year's Park Link Shuttle service which goes, in a loop, from one end of the Santa Monica Mountains Recreation Area (SMMNRA) to the other—to bring people from both the Valley and the beach/city side of the Santa Monica Mountains out to the parks and beaches. The shuttle dropped us off at Malibu Creek State Park where a group of about 50 gathered to delight in the sunny day and the magnificent views of our recreation area.

The five 20-passanger clean diesel buses are fully accessible for wheel chairs and have ample room for backpacks, boogie boards and picnic baskets. You can even bring your bike on board. Funding for the buses, bus stop improvements and the service contract comes from grants from the National Park Service's Alternative Transportation Program and from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. Other partners in the project include state parks, LA County, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro).

Senator Kuehl has worked hard for many years with others present at this event, including Assemblymember Fran Pavley, LA County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's Joe Edmiston, the National Park Service's Woody Smeck, and State Parks' District Superintendent Ron Schafer, to preserve and protect the many parks and trails in the SMMNRA. So, now, she is--along with the other members of this group--very happy to be not only partners in preservation but partners in transportation as well. We hope the public will learn about

and take advantage of this new method to beat the noise and traffic of the city and the suburbs--and save on gasoline as well.

So, come on up, over, and out to where the parks, trails and beaches are calling--for a soul-satisfying and inexpensive way to celebrate summer! We also know that when people come to know, use and love the outdoor treasures in our district, they will soon understand the importance of becoming good stewards and protectors of these lands. For more information about the service, call (888) 734-2323 or the National Park Service at (805) 370-2331 or use your computer to access www.parklinkshuttle.com or www.nps.gov/samo. For on-line trip planning from anywhere Metro operates, check www.metro.net or call 1-800-commute. ❖

Summer Interns

We have college and high school students interning in the District Office throughout the year. Interns typically help with legislative hearings, administrative work, special projects, and constituent casework.

We are fortunate to have an excellent group of interns this summer. They are: Molly Binenfeld, Tiffany Feredouni, Alex Miller, Adam Seiff, Jamie Nomura, and Natalie Oliva.



23rd Senate District. The 23rd Senate District includes the cities of Agoura Hills, Beverly Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Malibu, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Santa Monica, West Hollywood and Westlake Village and the communities of Bel Air, Brentwood, Canoga Park, Encino, Hollywood, Mt. Olympus, Pacific Palisades, Sherman Oaks, Studio City, Tarzana, Topanga, West Los Angeles, West Hills, Westwood and Woodland Hills.

Kuehl Legislation to Improve Water Resources Management

by Dennis O'Conner, Consultant
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water

This legislative session, Senator Kuehl is authoring a number of bills related to water resources management which are making their way through the Legislature.

SB 1640: Water Resources Planning

Last year, Senator Kuehl introduced SB 820 to help fill critical information gaps that currently hinder effective water resources planning. The bill would have reinforced existing water rights reporting requirements, promoted local management of groundwater basins, made urban water management planning more open and transparent, reinstated agricultural water management planning, and ensured that this information would be made widely available to all who need it.

Unfortunately, Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed SB 820. In his veto statement, the Governor expressed disagreement with the groundwater monitoring provisions, in particular, the focus on groundwater extractions.

SB 1640 is identical to the enrolled version of SB 820, with one important exception. Instead of including the groundwater reporting requirements that the Governor found objectionable, SB 1640 takes a different approach. It establishes a groundwater monitoring program that is consistent with the following goals:

- That all groundwater basins and sub-basins be regularly and systematically monitored locally for groundwater elevations and that the groundwater data be made freely and widely available.
- That, for those groundwater basins and subbasins not being locally managed, voluntary cooperative groundwater monitoring associations be allowed to form in order to monitor depth to groundwater.
- That, for those groundwater basins and subbasins not being locally managed and that are not monitored by cooperative groundwater monitoring associations, Department of Water Resources (DWR) be required to monitor depth to groundwater and to assess a fee to well owners within the DWR monitored area to recover its direct costs.

The measure has passed the Senate and the Assembly Water Committee and will be heard next in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

SB 1475: Groundwater Reporting

Currently, the State Water Board may designate a local agency to receive and maintain the groundwater extraction data for groundwater users within the agency's district if the State Board determines that specific conditions were met.

SB 1475 would make two changes to that law.

It would require, instead of allow, the SWRCB to designate a local agency to receive and maintain the groundwater extraction data if the local agency meets all the statutorily established requirements. And, it would allow a local agency to agree to accept and maintain extraction data for groundwater users outside the agency's district boundaries.

This bill is co-Sponsored by two water agencies in Senator Kuehl's district, Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency and United Water Conservation District. It is supported by the Calleguas Municipal Water District, also in Senator Kuehl's district, the County of Ventura, and the Association of California Water Agencies.

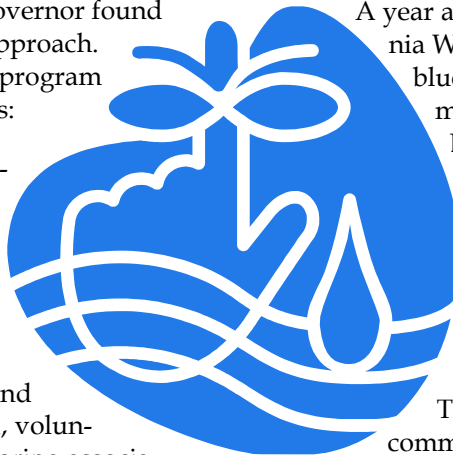
SB 1574: Delta Blueprint

A year ago last spring, the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) developed its blueprint for California Water. It recommended that the Governor assemble a Blue Ribbon commission to develop a strategic plan for reducing the vulnerability of the delta. After nearly a year of talking about the need for such a strategic plan, nothing has happened. So, Senator Kuehl decided to kick the ball down the field.

This measure would create a cabinet-level committee chaired by the Secretary of Resources to develop a blueprint for a sustainable Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The blueprint would address :

- Sustainable ecosystem functions.
- Sustainable land use and land use patterns.
- Sustainable transportation uses.
- Sustainable utility uses.
- Sustainable water supply uses.
- Sustainable recreation uses.
- Sustainable flood management strategies.

The measure has passed the Senate and will be heard next in the Assembly Health Committee.❖



Fighting for Affordable Housing

Demonstration at the National Condo Conversion Conference

By Laurie Newman, Senior Deputy

It is common knowledge that there is a serious lack of affordable housing in Los Angeles. I am one of the fortunate ones who bought a house 8 years ago, before the prices soared. There is no way I could afford to buy the house I live in today. But what about the people who aren't as lucky as I; or those who can't find an affordable apartment to rent?



Over the past decade, with the interests of big business having far more access to the ear of the Governor, not much legislation has passed and been signed that would help in preserving affordable units.

Quite the opposite: laws have been adopted that weaken local rent control ordinances and eliminate vacancy control. Sacramento has also made it much easier for landlords to go out of the rental business and convert their rental units to condos.

Because of the strong housing market and the opportunity to make money, Los Angeles is seeing an upswing in the number of rental units being converted to condos. According to the Los Angeles Housing Department, over 11,000 rental units have been converted to condos in the past five years. Although there are those who argue that condos provide affordable ownership opportunities for first-time home buyers, removing a large number of rental units inevitably triggers evictions and removes the most affordable units in the City from the housing stock. Individuals and families faced with losing their apartments are often simply out of luck because they can't find replacement housing that they can afford.

Senator Kuehl is a strong advocate for the preservation and development of affordable housing. Last month, I joined with approximately 100 other affordable housing and tenants' rights advocates as well as tenants, some of whom were facing eviction, to demonstrate against the flood of condo conversions in Los Angeles. This lively demonstration took place in front of the Hyatt Regency Century Plaza Hotel, where the National Condo Conversion Conference was taking place. The group marched on the sidewalk in front of the Century Plaza, holding signs, chanting slogans and carrying colorful umbrellas to symbolize the storm of evictions.

Housing advocates are asking the Los Angeles City Council to adopt a temporary moratorium on conversions and demolitions in order to give the City time to consider permanent remedies. Other cities have taken action to preserve affordable rental housing. For example, San Francisco limits conversion to 200 units per year, Berkeley's limit is 100 units per year. Santa Monica requires a plan for replacement of affordable units before demolition or conversion is approved and does not allow for conversion if the vacancy rate is below 5 percent.

I believe that we must push, on every front, for the creation and preservation of affordable housing. Although housing policy is set primarily at the local level, and there are many actions that can be taken locally, there are also a number of state and federal strategies that can help, including incentives for the building of affordable housing as well as funding, either in the state budget or by placing bond measures on the ballot. We must work to implement these strategies as well as develop innovative ideas to help provide housing for low and middle income families in the City of Los Angeles and throughout California.❖

Senator Sheila J. Kuehl

23rd Senate District

Capitol Office

State Capitol, Room 5108
Sacramento, CA 95814
phone (916) 651-4023
fax (916) 324-4823

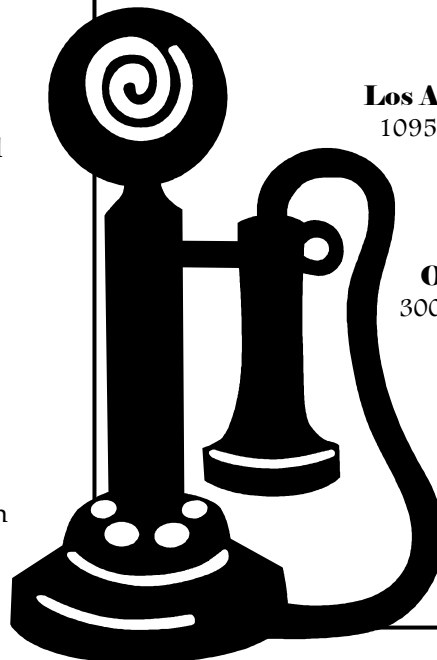
Los Angeles District Office

10951 W. Pico Blvd., Suite 202
Los Angeles, CA 90064
phone (310) 441-9084
fax (310) 441-0724

Oxnard District Office

300 W. Third Street, 4th Floor
Oxnard, CA 93030
phone (805) 486-3776
fax (805) 486-4279

Visit my website at
www.sen.ca.gov/kuehl



Medical Student Intern Joins Our Staff



By Carol Wallisch, Chief of Staff

We are fortunate to have a medical student interning in our capitol office this summer: Mohammad "Mo" Shahsahabi. Mo has recently completed his first year at the UC Irvine School of Medicine and is interning with us through the UC Center Sacramento Scholar Intern Program.

Though still undecided, he is leaning toward a specialty in Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine. As a future physician, he is particularly interested in expanding access to healthcare. Mo's time with us is primarily focused on SB 840, Senator Kuehl's universal health insurance bill.

As an undergraduate, Mo attended UCLA, earning a degree in psychobiology in 2003. On campus, he volunteered at the student health center, gave tours for under-

graduate admissions and was involved in the leadership of his fraternity. Following graduation, Mo worked for two years at the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration Hospital as a research associate and lab manager for the Pancreatic Research Group, investigating the causes and treatments for pancreatitis and pancreatic cancer.

Mo is currently involved with This Little Light, a charity group which raises funds and awareness for the Reconstructive Surgery Division of Childrens Hospital Los Angeles. He also serves as Vice-President of Fundraising for the UC Irvine chapter of the American Medical Association.

Mo is always active and enjoys being outdoors. His hobbies include basketball, football, scuba diving, sailing and bicycling. He is also a member of a beer brewing club. His favorite show is HBO's *Entourage*.

Originally from Iran, Mo's family immigrated to the United States in 1987. His parents currently live in Irvine and his sister lives in Boston. ♦

(ALTERNATIVE FUELS continued from page 2)

vested with far fewer effects to the food economy and the environment. Additionally in California, using crop residues to make ethanol could have a double benefit by giving farmers an alternative disposal method to open-field burning, which causes severe air impacts in the Central Valley.

The complex consequences that ethanol and other alternative fuels can have on our environment and health are currently being evaluated in a report being written by the California Energy Commission in conjunction with other state agencies. This report, which was required by Assembly Bill 1007 in 2005, will also set goals for increased alternative fuel use in the state for the years 2012, 2017, and 2022 that will optimize the environmental and public health benefits and cost effectiveness. The report should be finished by June 30, 2007.

In the meantime, the Legislature continues to pass legislation clearing the path for increased alternative fuel use, to fund research and planning, and to further discuss the long-range strategies for both environmental and energy independence benefits. Most recently, on July 21, Senator Kuehl attended an information hearing organized by Assembly Member Fran Pavley at Santa Monica College to provide an update on the progress of the AB 1007 report and the status of several transportation fuel alternatives.

In the future, transportation in California will probably be fueled by a mix of several different alternatives. Whatever this mix will and should be, California, hopefully will continue to lead the way. ♦

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curriculum and safer school environments. We can only arrive at these goals by first prohibiting the discriminatory messages that taint students' education and school climate.

Senate Bill 1437, Senator Kuehl's Bias-Free Curriculum Act, aims to take this first step by prohibiting anti-LGBT bias in the curriculum. Facing an entrenched hostility to the bill in the Governor's office, Senator Kuehl recently amended out the section requiring the inclusion of the positive roles and contributions of gay and lesbian people in the curriculum. In the hopes of getting a signature from the Governor this year, Senator Kuehl is concentrating the Bias-Free Curriculum Act on simply extending current curricular nondiscrimination laws that guard against bias on the bases of race, sex, religion, nationality and disability, to include sexual orientation and gender identity. Several experts recommended this type of measure after the passage of the Student Safety Act, and subsequent research has confirmed the need. Thus, though the Bias-Free Curriculum Act has been described as groundbreaking and the first bill of its kind, SB 1437 simply represents the next logical step toward the goal that Senator Kuehl pursued by authoring AB 537. ♦

Read SB 1437 online at:
www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html

L.A. Region Gets \$42.9 Million in Prop 46 Housing Funds

By Laurie Newman, Senior Deputy

I attended a hot, but gratifying event in Burbank at which the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) awarded a total of \$42.9 million from Proposition 46, the Housing and Emergency Shelter Trust Fund of 2002, to the Los Angeles Region. The bond act, passed by the voters in 2002, created a trust fund in the amount of two billion, one hundred million dollars for 21 different programs that provide housing for low income seniors, low and moderate-income families, farmworkers, the homeless and mentally ill, veterans and battered women's shelters.

HCD has handled the distribution of Prop 46 funds in a swift and efficient manner. The funds awarded to the Los Angeles region last month will provide housing opportunities for more than 2,577 of California's low income families.

I was happy to present certificates and recognize the following awardees from the 23rd State Senate District:

Workforce Housing Program (provides financial incentives to cities and counties for issuance of building permits for new homes that are affordable to low income households):

City of Los Angeles: \$3,575,594

City of Oxnard: \$291,730



Emergency Housing Assistance Program (provides funds for capital development activities for emergency shelters, transitional housing and safe havens that provide shelter and supportive services for homeless individuals and families):

Clare Foundation in the City of Santa Monica:
\$1,000,000

CalHome Building Equity and Growth in Neighborhoods (provides funds to cities and counties that have reduced regulatory barriers to the construction of new affordable ownership housing. The funds are for down payment assistance loans to low and moderate-income first-time home buyers.

City of Santa Monica for High Place West
(being built by Community Corporation):
\$1,350,000 ❖

The Pico Youth and Family Center

By Hilda Garcia, Field Representative

In October of 1998, a series of shootings prompted residents in Santa Monica's Pico Neighborhood to organize a Vigil for Peace. During this event, community leaders in the Pico Neighborhood in Santa Monica revealed that, between 1989 - 1998, twenty-two young people had been killed on the streets of the Pico Neighborhood. More than one thousand residents, families, and friends marched through the heart of the Pico Neighborhood to call for an end to the violence and to support families who have had to suffer for many years due to the neglect of this social problem.

The "Forum on Youth and Social Justice," a follow-up to the vigil, defined the problem of "gang violence" as a product of deeply rooted social and economic inequalities. Participants discussed issues of segregation, institutionalized racism and poverty as the root cause of the violence. Youth and families joined with elected officials to develop a community-based response to violence and youth-related issues. Various youth and community leaders urged the Santa Monica City Council to expand funding for Youth services in the Pico Neighborhood. After various months of planning and advocacy, the youth and families of the Pico

Neighborhood won a decisive victory.

On June 12th, 2001, the Pico Youth and Family Center (PYFC) was awarded a grant to deliver services to youth and their families. The PYFC is committed to equipping disenfranchised youth and their families with the leadership and advocacy skills needed to strengthen and sustain the community in which they live and to promote peace, unity, and social justice by modeling cooperation and advancing educational and economic opportunity.

Currently, the PYFC provides programs and support services for older youth ages 16-24 years old. The PYFC provides Music Studio production, tutoring, job readiness, computer training, leadership training through the Youth Council, mentoring, case management, and counseling services. The PYFC work through a number of creative programs to instill hope in our young people by engaging them in creating solutions to our community's problems. According to Founder/Executive Director Oscar de la Torre, "more than 240 youth access PYFC programs and support services per year". Please feel free to contact them at 310-396-7101 and at their website www.picoyouth.org. ❖

Staff Profile: The Resources of the Resource Committee

*By Bill Craven, Chief Consultant
Fifth in a Series*

I serve as the chief consultant for the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee which Senator Kuehl chairs in Sacramento, and, for this month's newsletter, I was asked to describe exactly what it is I do. I'm pleased to do so, and want to begin with a general observation about the committee structure of the Senate.

The California Senate, and, indeed, most every legislative body with which I am familiar, functions through the extensive use of committees. In the Senate, we have both standing policy committees and standing fiscal committees. There are also select committees and joint committees with the Assembly that are formed specifically to focus on one particular issue.

Policy committees are the first to consider whether a new bill should pass, fail or be amended. The major role for committee staff is to provide the members of the committee with sufficient accurate information to make this decision. The Natural Resources and Water Committee considers about 200 bills annually.

Bills are assigned to policy committees by the Rules Committee. For the Natural Resources and Water Committee, it should be no surprise that our jurisdiction puts us in the forefront of environmental policy for the state. We have jurisdiction over bills that affect coastal protection, forestry, mining, public lands and state conservancies, wildlife and endangered species, hunting and fishing, and state parks. Last year, our jurisdiction was expanded to encompass state water issues, including all of the water supply and water conservation bills that are heard each year. The Senate has one other environmental committee, Environmental Quality, that has jurisdiction over pollution, toxics, air quality, and the state environmental quality act. Together, the two committees have been responsible for virtually every environmental and natural resource law that currently exists. As many in Senator Kuehl's district know well, many of these laws are among the best in the nation, while others are far from perfect but represent the best compromise available at the time they were passed.

The Committee has a staff of four: three consultants, as they are called, and one committee assistant who handles our administrative needs and who records what happens to each bill that is voted on at a hearing. The other two consultants for our Committee are Dennis O'Connor and Marie Liu. Dennis handles almost all of the water-related bills that are assigned to us, and Marie and I divide up the other bills. I have been with the Committee since Senator Kuehl became chair, and have served as chief consultant for two years. Patty Hanson is our committee assistant.

Senator Kuehl has chaired the Natural Resources and Water Committee for 6 years. By any measure, she is an acknowledged expert on the legislative process and also on the environmental issues that come before the Committee. Not all committee chairs put their personal stamp on the bills that come before the committee, but Senator Kuehl most definitely does. We meet with Senator Kuehl prior to each hearing and discuss the bills that are on the agenda. She asks about the strengths and weaknesses of each bill and how it might affect environmental protection. Her

central focus is that the bills we pass, or the amendments we propose, make as much progress as possible in improving the environment, which is exactly what I would hope is the approach of every environmental policy committee chair.

My work includes supervision of the staff of the Committee, as well as serving as a senior consultant in analyzing the bills. Senator Kuehl relies on me and on each of our consultants to write detailed, accurate and neutral

analyses of every bill. Each bill that is to be heard by the Committee receives a written analysis prepared by the consultant assigned to that bill. Depending on the complexity of a bill, we will talk with the supporters and the opposition, conduct independent research, and ask experts (who are not involved in the particular legislation) for their views. These bill analyses are available to the public on the Legislature's internet site. Those who look at bill analyses will soon learn that they have a style all their own that is designed to convey a sketch of a bill in a rapid fashion to legislators who are often on a frenetic time schedule. While the Committee works for the majority party, we most definitely include a summary of the support and opposi-



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tion of each bill that is analyzed. The minority party has its own, smaller policy staff, with whom we closely co-operate, a practice that is not always followed in all policy committees.

A bill analysis may also propose amendments that most legislative authors will routinely accept since they know (at least in this committee) that those amendments reflect

The major benefit [of my job] is the opportunity to help craft legislation on issues that are important to the public and to the environment.

Senator Kuehl's views. Senator Kuehl's leadership on environmental matters is so highly regarded that the majority of the committee often accept her view of a given bill.

Once a bill passes our policy committee, it is subject to review elsewhere in the Senate. Most bills passed by a committee are next reviewed by a fiscal committee, and if a bill makes it through both a policy

committee and a fiscal committee, it must then be voted on by the entire Senate. If a bill successfully negotiates those steps, it then repeats that process in the Assembly. (Bills that start in the Assembly go through the same process.) After both houses act on a bill, the governor then approves or vetoes legislation.

Along with the other consultants on the Committee, I also work with Senator Kuehl on bills that she chooses to author. I usually work on 3-4 such bills each year, which can absorb a great deal of time. This year, for example, I am working on legislation that deals with forestry, ocean protection, climate change, strengthening the Department of Fish and Game, and mining. In addition to analyzing and staffing legislation, committee staff also works with all members of the Senate and even the Assembly to answer questions and to provide information on all the issues related to natural resources and water. We also get numerous calls from the public and the press asking about bills and about the actions (or inactions) of administrative agencies. The committee staff also works with Senator Kuehl's district office on local environmental issues.

In a couple of respects, I am also fortunate that my work allows me to participate in others aspects of the Legislature. First, because Senator Kuehl also chairs the environmental subcommittee of the Budget Committee, I work closely with the budgets of all the departments at Cal-EPA and the Resources Agency. It is a major benefit to my work to be able to link the policy work of the committee with the fiscal work of the budget subcommittee. Second, I have been fortunate to be called upon by the Senate Pro Tem's office from time to time to participate in the Senate's confirma-

tion process of the Governor's top environmental appointments who must be confirmed by the Senate. That work has given me real insight into the environmental strengths and weaknesses of the Schwarzenegger administration.

To sum up: This is a job that is hard to describe to the outside world, especially those who are not familiar with the state legislature. The major benefit is the opportunity to help craft legislation on issues that are important to the public and to the environment. It can be very stressful, challenging, rewarding, and frustrating, sometimes all at the same time, but most of the Senate policy consultants that I know, and all of those who work for Senator Kuehl, are very knowledgeable about the issues and they retain a strong commitment to the public and to the environment.❖

Senator Kuehl's Committee Assignments

Every piece of legislation is heard first in the policy committees of the house of origin (Assembly or Senate), also called **Standing Committees**, which meet on a regular basis throughout the year. Many standing committees have **Sub-Committees** that focus on particular issues. **Select Committees** study California policy issues and problems in order to develop longer range solutions. Senator Kuehl is on the following committees:

Standing Committees:

Natural Resources and Water (Chair)
Agriculture Committee
Budget and Fiscal Review
Environmental Quality
Government Modernization, Efficiency and Accountability
Health
Judiciary
Labor and Industrial Relations

Subcommittees:

Budget - Subcommittee No. 2 on Resources, Energy, and Environment (Chair)
Environmental Quality - Toxic Materials
Health - Aging & Long Term Care
Health - Stem Cell Research Oversight
Judiciary - Anti-Competitive Conduct and the Marketplace
Natural Resources & Water - Delta Resources

Select Committees:

School Safety (Chair)
Health Insurance Crisis in California (Chair)
California Correctional System
Children, Youth, and Families
Developmental Disabilities & Mental Health
Perchlorate Contamination